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1st Novel Depicts Depression Era

BY PETER ROWLEY

Ranjo by Jack Curtis (Macmillan: $5.95)

● This grim exciting first novel describes the relatively short violent life of a Midwestern farm boy turned Prohibition gangster.

His name is Gus Gilpin, youngest son of an Iowa farm family ruined by the Depression and by the exploitation of the local banker. After the financier forces his girlfriend into a life of prostitution and seizes some of their hard-earned land, he horsewhips Mr. Hundertmarx and flees to Kansas City.

Penniless, he becomes a gunman for a speakeasy boss, killing enemies whenever they attempt to assassinate him: "So remember I never killed anybody that didn't mean to kill me first, and I always gave them the first shot." Like a true Robin Hood, he defends the poor, swings a hard fist, and shoots quickly and straight.

The style of this book is taut, occasionally surrealistic. The opening chapter, depicting with loving strokes the Iowa landscape, the Gilpin family and a cruel scene of racial prejudice involving their hired hand, is done superbly. One might cavil at Gus and Bessie's characters and those of their enemies. More complexity would have added to the rather simple virtues of honesty and true love or the evil ones of cupidity and murder.

Curtis has written a dramatic, gripping story as fascinating as it is savage, as angry as it is sympathetic to the poor farmers.

Journalism Journeys to Rock Pile

Continued from Third Page

to anyone who has ever read his stuff: "Beneath Contempt."

One should always end on a cheery note, which in this case is a book about death, NO ONE WAVED GOODBYE: A CASUALTY REPORT ON ROCK AND ROLL edited by Robert Somma (Outerbridge & Dienstfrey: $4.95). Rock journalism generally focuses on the top stars of the moment, which means that readers are treated to more-or-less hectic accounts of the glittery, frenetic milieu of rock stars.

Perhaps the most perfect note struck during the recent film "Groupies" came when one of the girls gave her reason for doggedly going to bed with various pop musicians: she got to wear the freakiest clothes, sleep with the prettiest boys, and smoke the best dope. Well, consider that rock journalists are in the middle of exactly that scene. They can wear their best duds, at least be offered the best dope, and perhaps find that one of the girls not selected by the rock stars will oblige.

About eight months ago, rock journalists had some real perspective pushed in their faces. Within three weeks, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin died, both saturated with drugs. Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones (ex- of the Stones when he died, not an insignificant fact) had drowned a year earlier; Brian Epstein, the Beatles manager, died two years before that, overdosed with sleeping pills.

Death is, of course, supposed to keep us one and all on our toes. But since pop music exists as a world in which there is always today's star, with yesterday's hero only being metaphorically polished off, the tendency has been to ignore the only absolute.

"No One Waved Goodbye" is a collection of pieces by various journalists—Al Aronowitz, Lillian Roxon, Jon Landau and Richard Meltzer among others — in which they faced up to the deaths in rock. There is more than a little rumble-bumble in the book, a tendency to say, how tragic! But remember what They left us with.

There is also one perfectly awful dialog in which a rock PR man hysterically commemorates the deaths by recalling each and every time he personally met with, or admired, the fallen giants.

But Landau's piece, examining the fan's, and the journalist's responsibility to rock stars, is superb, worth the price of the book by itself. And Meltzer careens through a marvelously tasteless, grotesque ramble which should puncture anyone who decided to get a little pious for the occasion (but would be open for business tomorrow).

Rock is still waiting for a writer who can put it all into some sort of brilliant perspective; and I do not mean sorting out who was a major musical influence and who wasn't. Danny and the Juniors once sang perhaps the most famous set of lyrics about the music. "Rock 'n' roll is here to stay/It will never die." Most rock journalism devotes itself to those lines, and ignores what followed immediately: "It was meant to be that way/Though I don't know why."

"EXCELLENT"
—Saturday Review

"It works, and brilliantly, for Diana's story *is* the evolution of Weatherman . . . a history lesson of critical importance, a tragedy of alienated rage performed by some of America's most brilliant, sensitive and privileged youth." —Susan Brownmiller, *N.Y. Times Book Review*

DIANA
THE MAKING OF A TERRORIST
by Thomas Powers

An explosion on March 6, 1970, demolished a historic Greenwich Village townhouse. In the owner's absence the basement was being used as a bomb factory by members of the Weatherman faction of SDS.

A body found in the debris was identified as that of Diana Oughton. She had been killed by a nail bomb, possibly of her own making — a bomb designed to be used against people

"Powers has carefully reconstructed the history of the SDS and the Weatherman, has tracked their tactics beyond politics into that most frightening of all political syndromes — violence for the sake of violence. . . . The Weathermen made her a martyr; but the fact was she was their victim." — Robert Kirsch, *Los Angeles Times*

And, says *Publishers' Weekly*: "There's no blinking the significance of Diana's story, or the tragic power of Powers' book, which is written with sympathy and restraint and has the earmarks of a big seller."

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

A love story, a suspense story, a novel of America today—as seen by two young people who are being chased across it.

BC Chadwicke III is 22, just back from Vietnam. Laurel Taggert is 17, the victim of a father's psychotic love. Nice, cleancut, upper middle-class kids — except that BC has been unjustly accused of hit-and-run driving, of kidnaping Laurel and, finally, of trying to rape her. The objects of a nationwide search, they go off in a 1955 Morgan sports car on a quest of their own.

"The cross-country chase spins out into a story full of suspense," says the advance reviewer in *Publishers' Weekly*, praising "a fine new novel by the author of 'The Desperate Hours.'" And fellow bestselling novelist Noel Gerson says: "LIKE ANY OTHER FUGITIVE conclusively demonstrates that Joseph Hayes is 'a writer's writer.' His characters are rich and three-dimensional, and he has a sixth sense for plotting and construction. The sum total: a dramatic, engrossing novel of today, a sure-fire bestseller."

Like Any Other Fugitive

A NOVEL BY
Joseph Hayes
author of 'The Desperate Hours'

Selected by the Literary Guild; published this week and at all bookstores now. $7.95

The Dial Press

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